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**Shelley Perlove and Larry Silver, *Rembrandt's Faith. Church and Temple in the Dutch Golden Age.* University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009. 506 pp, 232 illus. (many in color). ISBN 978-0-271-03406-5.**

This is a wonderfully erudite and rich discussion of a fundamental aspect of Rembrandt's life and art: his faith. Rembrandt was as much a product of his milieu – intellectually, religiously, politically, and culturally – as he was an exception to it in his art. *Rembrandt's Faith* is an essential contribution to Rembrandt studies.

Many of Rembrandt's images allow for varied interpretations of his faith; his patrons were diverse, and included various Christian denominations and Jews. In nearly every case, Rembrandt steers a middle course in his varied interpretations. "His narratives allowed members of each major Protestant denomination – whether Reformed, Remonstrant, Mennonite, or Collegiant – to project themselves into the role of the faithful..." (p. 228) Accuracy in representing Old Testament figures was an issue in the seventeenth century. Rembrandt was not consistent in his depictions of Jews throughout his career, and he did not always view them in a favorable light. His depictions range from general types (earlier), to demonic caricatures, to individualized people; only occasionally are these depictions rooted in personal observation. By exploring Rembrandt's contacts with the religious communities, the parallels in his art and the texts of Calvin, Luther, L'Empereur, Grotius, the Statenbijbel, and others, the authors give a full account of the artist within the currents and cross-currents of theological issues of the Dutch seventeenth century.

The coming of the Messiah and Christian millennial thinking are established by the authors at the outset, as a tenet of Protestantism in the seventeenth century. Mention of the history book owned by Rembrandt would additionally support their argument. J. L. Gottfried's historical chronicle of 1630 was used by Pieter Lastman and owned by Rembrandt; it charts historical events according to the Four Monarchy system, which was followed by those sympathetic to millennialism (see A. Golahny, *Rembrandt's Reading*, Amsterdam, 2003). Within Rembrandt's orbit, it was followed in the decorations of Rosenborg Castle, Copenhagen, commissioned by Christian IV, with paintings by Lastman and Pieter Isaacs, among others.

By arranging their material thematically, the authors intelligently provide analyses of Rembrandt's treatment of a particular theme throughout his oeuvre. For example, each of Rembrandt's five representations of the Supper at Emmaus explores this event to achieve a different effect. The recognition of Christ's divinity by the faithful allowed Rembrandt to approach a biblical scene with varying fidelity to custom and location. In the 1648 painting (Louvre), Christ holds a braided

challah loaf, demonstrating that he broke the bread in the Emmaus story “after the manner of the Jews in the beginning of their meals,” according to the Statenbijbel annotations (p. 313). The setting, a niche-like recess, has been related to various Renaissance precedents, but here is associated with Callot’s illustration of the apse of the church where James and John were born, which appeared in Bernardino Amico’s book on Jerusalem, owned by Rembrandt. The challah bread demonstrates Rembrandt’s familiarity with Jewish customs at first hand, and the architecture indicates that he read the books he owned. In the 1654 etching, Christ seems to lose his corporeality and dissolves into light, as he offers bread with opened arms; allusions to the Last Supper are the plate of lamb on the table and the background baldachin which derives from Rembrandt’s 1635 drawing after Leonardo’s *Last Supper*. With these two examples, Rembrandt developed the Emmaus scene from revelatory to Eucharistic.

The Jerusalem temple and its reconstructions were a central aspect of Dutch theology. Available to Rembrandt were a number of reconstructions of the temple, and he made use of them with varying fidelity. He adapted a number of sources for his architectural settings (pp. 202-209). By correlating the different areas of the temple compound with these reconstructions and Rembrandt’s work, the authors propose that Rembrandt refers to precise locales within the compound. This is a fascinating conclusion, and gives another dimension to Rembrandt’s close reading of the Bible and other texts, and his close looking at the various reconstructions. The Chamber of the Parhedrin is the setting for the 1630 etching *Christ Disputing with the Doctors* and the 1629 *Judas Returning the Thirty Pieces of Silver* (pp. 228-231). The Priests’ Court, the public ritual space of the Temple sanctuary, is the location for the 1644 *Christ and the Adulteress* (p. 244). The Court of Women as the setting of the 1630 *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*. The Court of the Gentiles is the setting for the 1635 etching *Christ driving the Money Changers* (p. 250). While these settings endow Rembrandt’s images with an unusual authenticity, they may, or may not, have been recognized by most viewers. These settings, however, emphasize the importance of the Jerusalem temple as the locus of divinity. In his late works, Rembrandt departs from his earlier precision in physically recreating the temple. His settings are vague, as he concentrates on an “internalized church.” The sixth chapter, evocatively titled “Without Temple or Church,” expresses Rembrandt’s faith after 1660 as independent of physical attributes.

In 1641, Philips Angel praised Rembrandt’s historical accuracy and far-reaching knowledge, with specific reference to *Samson’s Wedding* of 1636 and its use of Josephus as a corollary to the Bible. Until recently, Rembrandt’s wide reading has been hardly acknowledged, although much attention has been paid to his wide-ranging visual sources. Rembrandt integrated his reading and his visual “library,” so that his works develop from a range of textual and pictorial sources. Perlove and Silver indicate how religious literary publications, often with their illustrations, contributed in a fundamental way to Rembrandt’s imagery. They have not only written a masterful study, but also raised many questions that will foster discussion on how Rembrandt read his various bibles, looked at their many illustrations, and gained much other information from personal contacts.

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